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ABSTRACT

Four 1975 textbooks for French civilization courses are cited including price, suggested level, format and a listing of contents. A review of one text follows: Rey and Santoni, "Quand les Francais parlent: Langue en contexte, culture en contraste," Newbury House Publishers. The reviewer states that this book is basically a sociological study of the French--French life as experienced by individuals and expressed by them in free interviews. Language, views and feelings are their own. Each chapter has a basic text, "temoignages" and exercises. The texts consist of previously published articles, interviews and original writing. "Temoignages" are interviews or published material. Exercises deal with vocabulary and idiomatic expressions and are intended to provoke discussion. The text is attractively illustrated and difficult expressions are explained in French. Some faults are the poorly placed explanatory notes, the lack of an end vocabulary or glossary and the pervasive serious and pessimistic tone of the writing. (CHK)

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1975 TEXTBOOKS FOR FRENCH CIVILIZATION

Reporter: Jack Davis Brown, University of Mississippi

N.B.--Although many fine books have appeared on various aspects of French life and culture, the following list contains only those specifically intended as textbooks.

Rey, Jean-Noël and Georges V. Santoni, Quand les Français parlent: Langue en contexte, culture en contraste.

Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House Publishers, Inc., 1975.

348 pages. Paperbound. 7 1/2" x 9 1/4". $9.95.

Level: advanced conversation or civilization course.
High maturity level.

Format: 14 chapters averaging 20 pp. each.

Contents: Les Etudiants, Les Professeurs, L'Autre Jeunesse, Les Ouvriers, Le Patrons, Les Cadres, Les employés, Des Fonctionnaires, Les Commerçants, Les Agriculteurs, Montbraye: Village de la Sarthe, Ecrivains et Artistes, Les Français par eux-mêmes, Des Français en Amérique, Sondages (satistical material), Bibliographie

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Curcio, Louis L. et al., Nouveau Visage du monde français.

Chicago: Rand McNally College Publishing Company, 1975.

216 pages. Paperbound. 8" x 9".

Level: intermediate ("presupposes a vocabulary equivalent to that of Le Français fondamental, 1er degré.")

Format: 21 chapters averaging 10 pp. each.

Contents: Le Shopping--style XX^{e} siecle; Evasion sur l'autoroute, Les Chefs en colère, Vers une société urbaine, La Nouvelle Classe ouvrière, La Révolte des agriculteurs, La Ménagère et le commerçant, Les Ecoles changent, Les Jeunes Français et l'argent, L'Occitanie veut vivre, Le Cinéma, Les Français et la télévision, Les Jeunes Français écoutent, Haïti, La Martinique,

La Chanson québécoise, Montréal--la Ville nouvelle et la nouvelle vieille-ville, Sénégal: Informations, Côte d'Ivoire: Découverte d'un peuple fascinant, Cameroun, Masques d'afrique noire.

Christin, Pierre et al., Séjour en France. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975. 302 pp. Paperbound. $5.95. 7 1/4" x 9".

Level: intermediate (also contains grammar review).

Format: 32 chapters averaging 8 pp. each.

Contents: A la recherche du Français, L'appartement de madame Pinson, Une ville folle, Au Quartier Latin, Un cours à la Sorbonne, Les premiers amis, Promenade, Au marché, Dans les boutiques de mode, Une réception élégante, Une réunion politique, Avec des militants, A l'usine, Quelque part en banlieue, A l'école, Vacances d'hiver, Un Accident, Le métier de journaliste, A la télévision, L'Assemblée Nationale, Une entreprise modèle, Chez les artistes, Un meurtre dans un studio, Livres et librairies, L'examen, La Fête foraine, Dans la campagne française, A la ferme, A la noce, Un grand amour, Voyage sentimental, Le départ.

Knecht, Loring et al., Echos de notre monde. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1975. 212 pp. Paperbound. 6 1/4" x 9 1/4".

Level: intermediate

Format: 18 lessons averaging 10 pp. each.

Contents: Confusion mentale, Le mendiant et l'électronique, Cafés, plumes, rasoirs, Le médium connaît la musique, Une bonne mémoire, Saint-Barth, L'humour noir des statistiques, La révolution verte, Le printemps des jeunes filles, Au téléphone, Saga de Daniel, Mme Josette et la jeunesse, La cuisine et la famille, La négritude et l'africanité, L'angoisse du départ, La personnalité négro-africaine, Kocoumbo et "ses morts," La négritude et la magie, Vocabulaire.

Review of Rey and Santoni, Quand les Français parlent.

In his foreword to this text, Laurence Wylie of Harvard states, "This is one of those rare textbooks which teachers will welcome to the shelves of their personal library as well as to their classrooms and school libraries. ...it is the presentation of French life as it is experienced by individuals and expressed by them in a series of free interviews. Their language is their own natural daily expression. Their views and feelings are their own."

Upon glancing through the contents of this text (see cover sheet) it becomes obvious quickly that the book is basically a sociological study of the French. For clarification, I must explain that the chapter "Montbraye: Village de la Sarthe" represents a "typical" (fictitious) provincial town. This chapter is the longest section of the book--containing some 50 pages--as compared with an average 20 pages per chapter elsewhere. Here the authors treat various elements of society: from the noble banking family who owns the château, but lives in Paris, to the merchant, to the farmer.

The section presenting statistical material on the French and their daily life is fascinating reading. This section and the bibliography on contemporary France are valuable reference materials for the teacher or scholar.

The structure of each chapter follows the pattern: 1) basic text, 2) témoignages, 3) exercises. Of the basic texts, seven are previously-published articles, three are interviews and four were written by the authors (these four being in the last four chapters). In Chapter 1, "Les Etudiants," the text is "La Course aux Diplômes," an article

from Réalités (1971). Chapter 2 uses a 1970 article from L'Express.

The témoignages of each chapter --and there are 2-7 per chapter-- are interviews or published material. In Chapter 2, for example, one témoignage, "Des Enseignants ouverts au dialogue," is a personal interview with Claude Frioux, president of the Université de Vincennes.

The third feature of each chapter is a series of exercises. There are sections dealing with vocabulary and idiomatic expressions (some approaching argot); for example, in Chapter 3 students complete sentences with such expressions as: avoir la trouille, le fric, en avoir ras l'bol, casser la baraque, casser la figure, être fichu, etc. A featured exercise is called "grilles culturelles" containing a series of basic statements followed by four or more completions of a true-false nature. For example, from Chapter 4 "Les Ouvriers" comes the following:

> L'argent, le vêtement, le langage sont trois éléments importants qui provoquent la prise de conscience de classe chez l'ouvrier, car:
>
> A. Pour les Français la qualité du langage determine en grande partie le niveau d'instruction.
> B. Un monsieur "bien habillé" est considéré comme un individu appartenant à une couche sociale privilégiée.
> C. Même s'il gagnait beaucoup d'argent et pouvait s'habiller, un ouvrier serait toujours reconnu comme ouvrier.
> D. L'ouvrier est seulement attiré par les signes extérieurs de richesse.

Depending on the student, the article or témoignage cited, each completion might be considered either true or false. The intended purpose, then, of this section is to provoke discussion.

Other types of exercise include situations, simulations, compositions and cultural contrasts between the U.S. and France.

The text is interspersed with black and white photographs which are generally attractive. The difficult expressions of the basic texts are in

italics and are explained in the margin in French. Generally, the publisher is to be congratulated on a pleasing format, easy-to-read type and an appealing and consistent mixture of type styles and faces.

Unless we write it ourselves, there is no text without faults. Here, for example, cultural concepts are explained by means of what the authors call "footnotes." These are simply notes, not even on the same page with the note numbers, and necessitate flipping pages for explanations. A serious drawback is the lack of an end vocabulary or glossary. Although the text is amazingly free of typographical errors, the proofreading was weaker towards the end of the text. We are used to the omission of accent marks from capital letters--and here the text is consistent--but I personally feel that "Ca" without its cedilla looks rather naked.

The most serious drawback to the work as a textbook is a certain negative, pessimistic tone which pervades it. It is all and always serious. There is little if any humor. It will take students of a certain disposition and a teacher of a certain personality to avoid being "turned off."